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French Colonial Film before and after *Itto*: From Berber Myth to Race War

David H. Slavin

French cinema's "first wave" washed over the colonies as well as the metropole, and filmmakers were soon carting their cameras off to remote corners of the empire to record exotic habitats and peoples for display to audiences at home. Colonial staffs and film crews cooperated in making the documentaries, gravitating toward each other as cobearers of the civilizing mission. Narrative fictional film shot on location in the colonies, cinema's other first wave, arrived in 1921 with *L'Atlantide*. Its million-dollar budget, surreal plot, hypnotic Saharan scenery, and intrepid Foreign Legion heroes caused a sensation at its Paris premiere. Filming on location became de rigueur, and the visionary proconsul of Morocco, Maréchal Louis-Hubert Lyautey, who founded the protectorate in 1912, put its resources at the disposal of French directors. By providing them with logistical support and schooling them in the realities of Moroccan society and culture, he supported a trend in French film toward authenticity and verisimilitude that gave it an advantage over Hollywood back-lot productions. Quick to see film's potential for capturing the public imagination and promoting his agenda, he sponsored films that encouraged mutual respect between cultures. Lyautey's star waned after he failed to anticipate or cope with the Rif uprising of 1925–26, and *cinéma colonial* found new sponsors in settler-dominated

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Algeria. New themes and ominous visions took hold: the West menaced by dark-skinned hordes, ghastly tropical disease, and Asiatic bolshevism. As scenarios and images of race war percolated through the media to public consciousness, French national identity took on a more racial cast. The subtle, pervasive ability of mass culture to legitimate ideas and values helped steer the metropole's *mentalité* away from paternal sympathy for the colonized and toward solidarity with the white settler.¹

Itto: Lyautisme's Last Hurrah

Itto (1934), a stunning film chronicling the Berber resistance to French colonization of Morocco, was the last and arguably the best of the *Lyautiste* Moroccan-based productions. But it was also a film made by committee, with differing if not conflicting agendas. Its backers and writers were enlightened imperialists of the *maréchal's* coterie, interested in celebrating his strategy for French colonial social control. The directors, Jean Benoît-Lévy and his partner, Marie Epstein, an early and influential woman filmmaker, pioneered a hallmark style of semifictional semidocumentary that also typified colonial films of the 1920s, the heyday of French Morocco's film industry. Mingling French actors with Berber-speaking nonactors translated in French subtitles, *Itto* achieved extraordinary nuance and sensitivity to the visual aspects of everyday life among the peoples of the Middle Atlas. Well-rounded Berber characters contrasted with the vicious caricatures of nonwhites that Hollywood paraded across the screen. Benoît-Lévy believed that by making the film look right, he and Epstein were depicting the Berbers authentically, but his own attitudes led inadvertently to a condescending tone. It was left to Epstein to impart the egalitarian, feminist values that emerge as the most significant and unique strain of the film.

Critics and scholars who admired the anthropological insights of *Itto's* portrayal of Berber life remained skeptical about the Romeo-and-Juliet love story attached to the docudrama. But despite appearances, the biography of *Itto* was historically more accurate than the anthropology, which was steeped in a variant of the noble-savage stereotype, the Berber myth.² Resurrected and transplanted from Algeria, where

¹ Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton, N.J., 1984); Pierre Boulanger, *Le Cinéma colonial de "L'Atlantide" à "Lawrence d'Arabie"* (Paris, 1975); Pierre Leprohon, *L'Exotisme et le cinéma* (Paris, 1945); David H. Slavin, "Heart of Darkness, Heart of Light: The Civilizing Mission and *le cafard* in *L'Atlantide*," in *Identity Papers: Contested Nationhood in Twentieth-Century France*, ed. Tom Conley and Steven Ungar (Minneapolis, Minn., 1996), 113–35.

² Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach, *Histoire du cinéma* (Paris, 1948), 199, 320–21; Boulanger, *Cinéma colonial*, 117–18; Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the*

An example of Marie Epstein's directorial technique: Three dramatic images sum up the film's meaning.



Baraka: Early in the film, alone on horseback, Hamou, played by real-life *khalifa* (caliph) Moulay Ibrahim, addresses his followers and displays his *baraka* (fitness to rule).



Baroud: At the end of the film, Hamou and Itto are together in the *baroud* (last stand) on the ramparts of the Tidikelt *q'asbah* (fortress).



The *toubib*'s wife suckles Itto's infant at her breast in a scene that merges Lyautey's Berber myth with Epstein's maternalist feminism.

it had been applied to the Berber Kabyles, the myth suited Lyautey's imperial strategy. Maurice LeGlay, one of the colonels in the resident general's *équipe* of advisers on native affairs, formulated the Berber policy as part of a strategy of indirect rule. He also authored the novels from which *Itto* was drawn. Other intimates of Lyautey helped bring the project to the screen, in the process drawing a page from his own handbook, exerting influence over colonial policy by masterfully manipulating the French press and sponsoring films that encouraged metropolitan respect for the indigenous Muslim elites as helpmates in maintaining order in the protectorate.

When he assumed control of the protectorate in 1912, Lyautey had hoped to prevent *faiseurs* (swindlers) from defrauding rural clanspeople of their land and disrupting the orderly development of the country by big financial consortiums operating through the indigenous elites. To that end, he tried to restrict the activity of small European merchants and farmers, but he was unable to hold back a steady stream of French, Spanish, and Algerian *pied-noir* settlers and incurred their wrath by refusing to grant them economic and legal advantages over the native elites. War with the Riffian Berbers of the Spanish zone to the north broke out in 1925; the settlers took their case to Paris, and the government forced Lyautey to resign. His successors gradually gave ground to the settlers and replaced indirect rule with an Algerian-style regime, where all "whites" held privileged status over all natives.

Under Lyautey's auspices, a Franco-Moroccan film industry arose and thrived, producing travelogues, ethnological docudramas, and narrative fiction. Through intimate friends in the banking and investment firms that controlled the Moroccan economy, Lyautey could provide contacts for financial backing. After the death of Sultan Mawlay Yusef, whom Lyautey had installed in 1912, film production declined, but *Lyauteisme* still reverberated in colonial policy-making circles when its creator died in July 1934. *Itto's* premier in December wrote an epitaph on an era, a last hurrah for the man and for Franco-Moroccan filmmaking. The film recounts the history of the uprising and submission of the Zaiane, the Chleuh Berber clans of the Middle Atlas, from 1914 to 1921 and presents it as a textbook success of Lyautey's policy. He had won over the most powerful nobles of Marrakech, like the al-Glaoui, the largest landowners in the region, who called on their own Chleuh followers to help the French put down the uprising. In the 1920s Si Abdallah al-Glaoui, *pacha* of Marrakech and *conseiller indigène*,

French Cinema (Urbana, Ill., 1990), 161–62; Pierre Sorlin, "The Fanciful Empire: French Feature Films and the Colonies in the 1930s," *French Cultural Studies* 2, pt. 2, no. 5 (1991): 142–44.

aided French directors by recruiting thousands of Chleuh as movie extras. *Itto's* credits pay homage to the *pacha* as the film company's benefactor. In fact, mistakes and setbacks marred the Zaiane campaign like any other, and the film's real success was in projecting, one last time, the myth of Lyautey's infallible leadership.³

The Berber Myth

The French public received sharply different impressions of Muslim society from Morocco than from Algeria. *Lyauteisme* idealized Morocco's customs, traditions, and religion; romanticized the *bled*, the countryside, over the city; and promoted the Berber myth, a self-serving array of half-truths concocted to explain the origins of the Maghreb's earliest inhabitants and to justify a policy of divide and rule.⁴ The myth convinced the metropole that an alliance with these *indigènes* could be forged out of hatred of the Arabs and affinity for France. This fantasy ensnared home governments and colonial administrators alike, complicating the task of controlling Arabs, Berbers, native elites, and growing numbers of French settlers and tourists. Though the need for military occupation continued, colonial strategists clung to the Berber myth, which led to a distorted perception of political and cultural realities that undermined economic development and, ultimately, French rule.

The first subjects of the myth, the Berbers of the Algerian Kabyle, the central highland littoral, had remained aloof from Abd el-Kader's war of resistance (1830–47), and French observers sought to explain why. Noting that many had red hair, green eyes, and freckles, they concluded that Kabyles descended from the Celts and hence were cousins of what French schoolbooks call “nos ancêtres les Gaulois.” Kabylophiles asserted that they had been Christians and that Islam had converted them by the sword; Catholics were tempted to believe that they could be brought back to the fold. Their egalitarian *djemâ'a* (village assemblies) beguiled republicans as well. Disillusionment set in after Kabylia became the epicenter for al-Muqrani's uprising (April–October 1871), and Père Blanc missionaries spent the next three decades in a fruitless effort to win converts. By 1900 Kabylophiles had concluded that assimilation and Frenchification had led to upheaval and disloca-

³ William A. Hoisington Jr., *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (New York, 1995); Douglas Porch, *The Conquest of Morocco* (New York, 1982); René Gallissot, *Le Patronat européen au Maroc* (Rabat, 1964); Daniel Rivet, *Lyautey et l'institution du protectorat français au Maroc*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1988); Didier Lazard, *Max Lazard, ses frères et Lyautey: Lettres, 1894–1933* (Neuilly, 1990); Pierre Lyautey, ed., *Lyautey l'Africain: Textes et lettres*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1953).

⁴ Edmund Burke III, “A Comparative View of French Native Policy in Morocco and Syria, 1912–1925,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 9, no. 3 (1973): 178.

tion; their subsequent efforts were limited to blocking further Arabization, stimulating Berber identity, and overcoming the montagnards' sense of inferiority to the urbanized Arabs. To the extent that this policy granted privileges to the Berbers, it met with implacable resistance from the settlers. Indigenous Jews had acquired French citizenship in 1871, and the settlers barred the way to any step that might permit another group of natives to dilute their racial privileges. During the 1954–62 Algerian war, which ended the colonial era, Kabylia became a Front de Libération Nationale stronghold.⁵

Berber-speakers made up half the Moroccan population, and Lyautey protected their *vie intime*, clan customs, and traditions from external intrusions. He claimed to have paved the way for a greater Morocco by “conquering the Berber soul” and thus creating a more sophisticated version of the Berber myth.⁶ The Directorate of Native Affairs, staffed by a team of officers, studied Arabic and Berber language and customs and by 1919 had instituted a form of rule based on the notion that the social characteristics of the Berbers set them apart from the Arabic-speaking population. Like the Kabyles, they were original inhabitants who had resisted invasions from their mountain strongholds and remained independent of the sultans. Insofar as they had been Islamicized, Berbers were “frank schismatics” whose customary law superseded *shari’ya* (Qur’anic law). Beneath the Muslim veneer they preserved the superstitions, customs, rituals, and beliefs of earlier faiths.⁷

Although the essence of Islam is the intimate union of law and religion, Berber customary law was more like ancient Roman and French patriarchal codes than like *shari’ya*. The status of women was similar to that of women in Europe, and Berber practices were often exactly opposite to those prescribed by Arab custom and Qur’anic directives. Berbers resisted the *makhzan*, the sultan’s state, and the emergence of powerful chiefs, because an instinctive democracy was exercised through the *djemâ’a*. While outside enemies brought clans together, the *djemâ’a* could not resolve matters of family honor, which caused frequent clan feuds.

In short, “by 1919 the essential traits of the Berber myth had been sketched in, and the myth itself given a wide diffusion. By 1919 as well,

⁵ Edmund Burke III, “The Image of the Moroccan State in French Ethnological Literature: A New Look at the Origin of Lyautey’s Berber Policy,” in *Arabs and Berbers: From Tribe to Nation in North Africa*, ed. Ernest Gellner and Charles Micaud (London, 1973); Charles Robert Ageron, *Les Algériens musulmans et la France (1871–1919)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1968), 1:268–83; 2:873, 890.

⁶ Robin Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule: French Administration of Tribal Areas, 1912–1956* (London, 1973), 51; Bernard-Georges Gaulis, *Lyautey intime* (Paris, 1938), 209.

⁷ Burke, “Image of the Moroccan State,” 175–79, 193–94.

all of the essential policy decisions had been taken on which the completed edifice would be erected between the two wars. The foundations for France's Berber policy in Morocco were laid prior to 1919 under Lyautey."⁸ His first step was to have the Middle Atlas Berbers submit to the *dawla*, the protectorate administration, not the *makhzan*. In return, he guaranteed that Berber law and custom would prevail over *shari'ya*. As early as September 1914 he had pressed the sultan to issue a *dahir* setting forth (in the vaguest terms) Berber rights to their own judicial regime, and after the world war ended he ordered native affairs officers to research the exact nature of customary law.⁹

LeGlaz Reinvents the Berber Myth for Lyautey

Directors Benoît-Lévy and Epstein, each with a distinctive and influential point of view, were surrounded by a team that scripted and produced the film and had been close associates of the *maréchal*. As the credits state, the film was "drawn entirely from the works of Maurice LeGlaz," an accomplished writer whose ten novels and memoirs were based on his experiences in the war against the Chleuh. LeGlaz, an instructor with the first French military mission to the sultanate in 1910, became Lyautey's chief adviser, heading the colonial affairs department during the formative decade of the protectorate. The principal advocate of the Berber policy, he convinced Lyautey that the Arabs had never conquered the Middle Atlas Berber clans or interfered with their internal affairs. The *makhzen* had exacted tribute only as a pledge of obeisance to the sultan, and LeGlaz devised the notion that the country was divided into the *bled makhzen* (land of order) and the *bled s siba* (land of dissonance). This view justified French intervention but ignored the fact that Europeans had been smuggling in guns for decades in an effort to extract mining and other concessions from local clan leaders, disrupting the balance of power in key regions and creating the anarchy that the French later sought to suppress.¹⁰

⁸ Ibid., 194–95; unpublished reports by Colonels LeGlaz, Berriau, and Bruno, in Ministry of War Archives, Vincennes, ser. E-2; Hoisington, *Lyautey*, 41–53.

⁹ Burke, "Image of the Moroccan State," 191, 195–99; William A. Hoisington Jr., "Cities in Revolt: The Berber Dahir of 1930 and France's Urban Strategy in Morocco," *Journal of Contemporary History* 13 (1978): 433–48; David H. Slavin, "Rebels, Settlers, and Tourists: French-Moroccan Cinema in Decline, 1926–1931" (unpublished manuscript on *L'Occident* [1927] and *Cinq Gentlemen maudits* [1931]).

¹⁰ Maurice LeGlaz, *Récits marocains de la plaine et des monts* (Nancy, 1920); idem, *Badda: Fille berbère* (Paris, 1921); idem, *Le Chat aux oreilles percées: Histoire marocaine* (Paris, 1922); idem, *Itto: Récit marocain d'amour et de bataille* (Paris, 1923); idem, *La Mort du Rogui* (Paris, 1926); idem, *Les Sentiers de la guerre et de l'amour* (Paris, 1930); idem, *Nouveaux Récits marocains* (Paris, 1932); idem, *Chronique marocaine* (Paris, 1933). Eight of his works were published by Cie. Berger-Levrault, two by Plon (Germaine Ayache, "Société rifaine et pouvoir central marocain," *Revue historique*, no. 516 [1975]: 345–70).

Ignoring France's role in disrupting Moroccan society, LeGlaz imported the Berber myth to Morocco. With their male-dominated, militarized clan democracy and heterodox beliefs, the Berbers were France's natural allies if they could be weaned from Islamic "fanaticism" and Arabic culture. LeGlaz derived this exercise in wishful thinking from Captain Charles de Foucauld, a Père Blanc missionary, intelligence officer, and apostle to the central Saharan Tuareg, who advocated converting them to the Latin alphabet and Catholicism. After twelve years in the desert, Foucauld had converted only three people, but Lyautey embraced LeGlaz's more secular views. In retirement, the *maréchal* later reminisced that "I always supported the Berber element over the rather degenerate Arab element. . . . The Berber element will never be understood except by a soldier." Like the British after the Gurkha Wars of 1815–16, the French built a mystique of a "warrior race" around the Berbers and then used it to justify recruiting them as mercenaries.¹¹

On screen, *Itto* recounted and mythologized Lyautey's signal success, forcing the Chleuh-speaking Berbers of the Middle Atlas to submit after six years of resistance under their leader and Itto's father, Moha ou Hamou el Zaiani. Through his clanspeople, the Ait Zaiane, Hamou mobilized central Morocco and, just after the Great War broke out, launched an assault on the French forces. Stretched paper thin by the needs of the western front, these troops kept control of Morocco, and a grateful government promoted Lyautey to *maréchal*. *Itto* reminded France of Lyautey's—and LeGlaz's—achievement, perhaps with an eye to reexerting influence over colonial policy and as an encomium to enhance the *maréchal*'s prestige in the twilight of his life.

The Film and the Novel

Itto's opening credits succinctly announce its main theme as "the story of the submission of a tribe in the Atlas Mountains."¹² Yet more than half of the film's running time is spent in the Berber milieu, and as the story unfolds, the points of view of Hamou, Itto, and her betrothed, Miloud, are as fully expressed as those of the French characters. In the first scenes, Hamou rallies hundreds of his followers to his cause and

¹¹ Germaine Ayache, *Les Origines de la guerre du Rif* (Rabat, 1990), 25–31; Gaulis, *Lyautey intime*, 209; Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule*, 51–52, 56; Maurice LeGlaz, *L'Afrique française*, Nov. 1935; idem, "Ecoles françaises pour les berbères," *L'Afrique française*, Mar. 1921; Alal al-Fasi, *The Independence Movements in Arab North Africa*, trans. Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh (New York, 1970), 120; Burke, "Image of the Moroccan State," 191–99; John P. Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation: The Origins and Rise of Moroccan Nationalism, 1912–1944* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 68–75, 178–90; Paul Marty, *Le Maroc de demain* (Paris, 1925), 241–52; Slavín, "Heart of Darkness," 122.

¹² The opening credits (*générique*) are restated in *Pour vous*, no. 318 (1934): 7.

urges them to take up arms against the French. His main ally, Hassan, Miloud's father, pledges his support. A French plane appears overhead, and Hassan's men shoot it down, wounding the pilot and stranding him behind enemy lines. Taking the aviator hostage, Hassan sends Miloud under a flag of truce to the French camp to fetch a *toubib* (doctor). The doctor who is dispatched becomes a central character, and in real life such officers were regarded as key agents of pacification. While treating the flyer's wounds, he discovers that the sheep of Hassan's clan are dying of anthrax and inoculates them, saving the flocks and averting a disastrous blow to the clan. When Hassan vows to resist the French no longer, Hamou accuses him of betrayal, and Miloud defies his father to rejoin Hamou's forces. But Hamou rejects Miloud; his men ambush the young man and leave him for dead. The *toubib* saves his life, swinging his loyalty to the French and setting the stage for the final tragedy. Itto bears Miloud's child and is torn between father and lover. In the end she joins Hamou in his fortress, to be gunned down by the *goums*, the Moroccan mercenaries of the French, in a last stand.¹³

Derived from several of LeGlaz's works, the film's screenplay helped French audiences identify with the Berber protagonists by interweaving their stories with those of the French. The novel *Itto* centers on the conflict between father and daughter, and LeGlaz portrays Hamou as blinded by ambition and concern with his own power, even though his followers would benefit from French rule. Hamou spoke for those Zaiane who saw France as an evil empire and believed the prophecy of the clan's *marabout* (spiritual guide), Ali Amhauouch, who said that they would never be vanquished as long as they held their ancient fortress at Tidikelt. At a clan assembly, Itto advocated peace, accusing Hamou of manipulating the prophecy and lying. Arrested and condemned for *lèse-majesté*, she escaped to the French lines, where Hamou's men, not the French *goums*, shot her. After their pacification, the Zaiane buried her near the Middle Atlas stronghold of Khénifra, revering her as a *marabout* in her own right. Dissident nomads made pilgrimages to her shrine and came in contact with French officers, ideas, and works. The reconnaissance pilot shot down over Tidikelt, whose life she had saved, also visited her grave. For LeGlaz, Itto reflected a Berber spirit of co-operation and tolerance antithetical to Arab Muslim "fanaticism," and she continued to be a force for assimilation even after her death.¹⁴

¹³ My thanks to Dudley Andrew of the University of Iowa Institute of Film and Society for lending me a videotape of the film. See also Boulanger, *Cinéma colonial*, 112–15.

¹⁴ LeGlaz, *Itto*, 32, 37, 61, 94–98, 126–27, 234–37; Rivet, *Lyautey*, 2:121, 137, 168, 188, 196–99; Hoisington, *Lyautey*, 63.

The Chleuh Resistance in Historical Context

Hamou's war was part of a decade-long Moroccan effort to fend off French encroachments. In 1912 Lyautey deposed Sultan Hafiz and pressured the *ulaama* (Islamic assembly) of Fez to proclaim in his stead Mawlay Yusef, a compliant younger brother and "exquisite French marionette brought out for command performances."¹⁵ When the Great War broke out and Paris ordered Lyautey to send his reserves to the western front, rural resistance flared. Aided with money, supplies, and advisers from Turkey and Germany, Abd el-Malik and Raisuli roused the Rif and the Gomara in the north; el-Hiba, a *rogui* (pretender to the throne), mobilized the south. Ali-Amhaouch held sway in the Middle Atlas, ably seconded by Moha ou Said and Hamou, baron of the Zaiane clans and father-in-law to the deposed sultan, a personal stake that made him the first to rise up.

With the help of al-Glaoui, the *pacha* of Marrakech, Lyautey prevented the regional movements from coalescing around a single leader. Liberally supplied with French weaponry, Glaoui clanspeople kept el-Hiba in check, cut off from the Zaiane. General Paul Henrys had checked Hamou by investing Khénifra, but the anticipation of a general French evacuation incited heavy attacks. Henrys applied the Berber policy and, by the fall, was convinced that it was working. The attacks dwindled even while his reserves were still embarking for Europe. However, Colonel René Laverdure impetuously launched an unauthorized assault on Hamou's mountain camps on 13 November, and on the road back to Khénifra his column was ambushed. Hamou's men killed 613 French, including Laverdure, and captured two batteries of field artillery. The stunning defeat passed unnoticed in France, where the army labored to stop the Germans at the Marne and Ypres. But Khénifra nearly fell, according to Lyautey, jeopardizing the entire French position in Morocco and inspiring wider resistance in the Maghreb. Lyautey prevented the small uprisings from igniting a regional war, which, after the Tuareg took up arms to expel the French, might have swept across the Sahara to Suez and joined with the Arab revolt, which had allied with the British but had sprung from the same impulses as the movements in the Maghreb.

Yet the peaceful penetration policy had broken down in the Middle Atlas. Bestowing civilization's benefits and currying the Berbers' favor failed; pacification required brute force. The French, exerting ever

¹⁵ William A. Hoisington Jr., *The Casablanca Connection: French Colonial Policy, 1936–1943* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1984), 7; see also Edmund Burke III, *Prelude to Protectorate in Morocco: Precolonial Protest and Resistance, 1860–1912* (Chicago, 1976), 197–99.

greater military pressure after the armistice of 1918, finally cracked Zaiane unity. Hamou actually was killed in the spring of 1921 in a skirmish between his resistance fighters and Zaiane collaborators. The system Lyautey put in place before 1914 worked elsewhere in Morocco and eventually paid handsome dividends. But *Itto*, the last film to celebrate his work, used as its subject the events that in reality revealed its most serious flaws.¹⁶

Lyautey's System and the Making of *Itto*

At the heart of Lyautey's system was a native affairs officers training program, headed by Colonel Henri Berriau, that required 140 hours of language instruction in both Arabic and Berber and 84 hours of Arabic literature, culture, and law. *Stagiaires* (trainees) earned the equivalent of a master's degree in ethnology, writing *thèses* that expanded French knowledge of the customs and practices of the clans. They also became *hakim* (advisers) to the clans, defending them against settler predation. For this, they drew fire from the European-controlled Chambers of Commerce, which pressured Berriau to remind his men that settlers were not enemies but "indispensable for the realization of our native program . . . for the native, the initiator, stimulator, living example" of enterprise and development. Berriau's bureau drew on surveyors and engineers for technical support, but most crucial was the medical staff.¹⁷

Within weeks of his arrival in Morocco in 1912, Lyautey created *groupes sanitaires*. He regarded the army's doctors as military assets of the highest order; enemy wounded were treated with the same care as his own troops, and, as he wrote to his mentor, General Joseph Gallieni, with four more doctors he could release four battalions from the duty of suppressing revolts. Doctors assigned to rural clans worked with *q'uids* (local judges or "chiefs") and made French political authority palatable. They traveled the length of the country, and Lyautey consulted them on political matters because they were astute, independent ob-

¹⁶ Hoisington, *Lyautey*, 65–78, 89–92; Rivet, *Lyautey*, 1:188–200; Ross E. Dunn, *Resistance in the Desert: Moroccan Responses to French Imperialism, 1881–1912* (London, 1977), 26, 166–67, 181, 221; Edmund Burke III, "Moroccan Resistance, Pan-Islam, and German War Strategy, 1914–1918," *Francia* 3 (1975): 434–64; idem, *Prelude to Protectorate*, 9, 110, 112, 118, 122, 203, 455; Lyautey, *Lyautey l'Africain*, 1:23, 27, 253; 2:197, 203–10, 275, 300–301, 314–15; Larousse *du XXe siècle* (Paris, 1929), s.vv. "Chleuh," "Zaian"; al-Fasi, *Independence Movements*, 49–52, 92–94, 118–19; Douglas Porch, *The Conquest of the Sahara* (New York, 1984), 278–89.

¹⁷ Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule*, 181; Henri Berriau, "Conférence de Meknès" (1918), *L'Afrique française*, Nov. 1920; Alan Scham, *Lyautey in Morocco: Protectorate Administration, 1912–1925* (Berkeley, Calif., 1970), 92. The Centre de haute étude administratif sur l'Afrique et l'Asie moderne, Paris, contains an archive housing 4,495 *thèses* in 257 volumes.

servers. "The role of the doctor as agent of penetration, of attraction, and of pacification is a most solidly established fact," he concluded, and the movie magazine *Pour vous* quoted this remark in its first article on *Itto*.¹⁸

Other protégés of Lyautey completed the work of transferring LeGlaz's novel to the screen. Georges Duvernois, who wrote the screenplay, had been subprefect of Constantine when Lyautey had been stationed in Algeria. After serving in 1906–7 as Premier Georges Clemenceau's chief of staff, he became secretary-general of the protectorate. Etienne Rey, who collaborated on the dialogue, wrote a successful book in 1912 defending the French mission in Morocco; joined the army in 1914; and became Lyautey's morale officer, in fact his "right arm," implementing the *maréchal's* plans to improve the morals of the recruits throughout Morocco by organizing 150 "soldiers' parlors," partly financed by the Young Men's Christian Association and modeled on its reading rooms. Berriau's widow, Simone, an actress from the Opéra-Comique, took the role of Itto. She was probably the only woman in France who spoke Berber fluently. Berriau, born in 1870 and sixteen years his commander's junior, had been Lyautey's protégé and intimate and one of a team of colonels on his staff since his first general command on Algeria's tense Moroccan border in 1903. Lyautey, who treated him as a surrogate son, had disapproved of his marriage to an actress and longtime mistress, but Madame Berriau became her husband's stalwart helpmate, acquiring nursing skills and learning Berber, probably in the officers' training school he had founded. Director of political affairs and intelligence services, Berriau was recovering from wounds received in a skirmish when he contracted influenza during the pandemic of December 1918 and died. His death affected Lyautey deeply, and his widow's presence in the cast honored his memory.¹⁹

Benoît-Lévy's Folly

Lyautey's adjutants in the Zaïane campaign, Henrys, Colonel Henri Simon, LeGlaz, and Berriau's widow were all associated with the production of *Itto* and could reach out to the technocratic, well-oiled rural

¹⁸ René Cruchet, *La Conquête pacifique du Maroc* (Paris, 1934), cited in Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule*, 258–61; Pierre Delatère, "Dans l'Atlas marocain avec Jean Benoît-Lévy, Marie Epstein et la troupe d'*Itto*," *Pour vous*, no. 283 (1934): 14.

¹⁹ Henry Malherbe, "*Itto*," *Pour vous*, no. 331 (1935): 4; Boulanger, *Cinéma colonial*, 118; Papiers Lyautey, Archives nationales (AN, 475 AP), folder no. 610, "Personnel du Maroc" (my thanks to William A. Hoisington Jr. for bringing this document to my attention; see Hoisington, *Lyautey*, 52); Lyautey's eulogy to Berriau, *L'Afrique française*, Dec. 1918, 417–19; Rivet, *Lyautey*, 1:61, 196–99; 2:29, 194–200, 215–16; 3:191–92; Etienne Rey, *La Renaissance de l'orgueil français* (Paris, 1912).

administrative machine they left securely in place when they departed. Although native affairs officers were no longer able to protect tribes from economic exploitation by the *colons* (settlers), they continued to maintain order with a subtle combination of bribery, force, good intelligence, and respect for local customs. Thus when *Itto's* expedition, consisting of seventy-five actors and technicians, twenty-two cars, and three lighting and sound trucks, set out from Marrakech in April 1934 under the protection of the *pacha* al-Glaoui, French officers and their local contacts took them in hand. Acting as an invisible "special-effects department" for the crew, they negotiated with local notables for extras, provided logistical support, and even built fifty kilometers of road to haul equipment to the location at the high plains village of Taliouine. But Benoît-Lévy studiously ignored every aspect of the production process that did not fit his preconceived notions. Like Western tourists the world over, he saw what he was programmed to expect:

Natural actors are those who approach closest to nature; they are creatures whose minds have not been cultivated, who have kept their psychological reflexes independent of any control by will or reason. Children are the ideal natural actors of the screen, but I have found the same freshness of mind, the same innocence, in the Chleuh of the Atlas. The primitive life led by these nomad warriors kept their intellectual development at the level of that of a normal child who has not yet felt the impact of reason and education.²⁰

Benoît-Lévy believed in "universal civilization," that is, that humans are the same whether in the Atlas Mountains or in a town in central France. Ignorant of the Chleuh's history, however, he characterized them according to French anthropological codes, which had replaced the view of non-Europeans as innately inferior with the concept of the "primitive." For founders of the Ethnology Society and the Musée de l'homme—Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, Michel Mauss, and Daniel Rivet—"pre-logical" peoples with an "aversion to rational thought" could catch up with modern societies by imitation. This line of thought provided the rationale for the League of Nations trusteeships, which held the victors in the Great War responsible for the well-being and progress of the peoples of colonies confiscated from the defeated powers. Through this lens, Benoît-Lévy saw the Chleuh as uncorrupted by modernity.

Contrary to his naïve paternalism and white-blind disingenuousness, however, the Chleuh were old hands at filmmaking and had integrated it into their world. They called *Itto's* cast and crew *les Ait-cinéma*

²⁰ Jean Benoît-Lévy, *The Art of the Motion Picture*, trans. Theodore R. Jaeckel (New York, 1946), 167; see also Leprohon, *Exotisme*, 209.

(cinema clan), but the appellation applied to them. They had acted in a dozen films in the 1920s. In assessing their performances in *L'Occident* (1927), Henri Fescourt declared that, despite language barriers, Chleuh extras easily and quickly followed the most complex directions. Inadvertently, *Itto* revealed the Chleuh adaptation to colonial dependency, defacing the noble savage image conjured up by Benoît-Lévy. After Miloud, played by a local shepherd named Ali Ben Brick, recovers from his wounds and swears allegiance to France, he loiters about the French encampment like “a trading post Indian.” Moreover, North Africa was devoid of film-processing studios, forcing the directors to send raw film by car to an airstrip, by plane to Paris, and back again in order to review daily rushes.²¹

The Russians Are Coming: *Itto's* Cinematographic Influences

The directors belonged to two of French cinema's founding families, and their connections in French and Russian filmmaking assured them of technical and financial backing. Benoît-Lévy's father led the Pathé company from 1906 to 1908; a Paris lawyer, he had acquired two hundred theaters for Pathé and guaranteed its dominance in French film distribution. Marie Epstein's brother, Jean, worked with them both before he struck out on his own and “bequeathed” his sister to his former partner. A cinematic visionary of the 1920s, Jean Epstein worked out theories of montage that paralleled those of Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin in the realm of film theory and semiotics. Reciprocating influences from Moscow and Paris pressed the debate forward, and while the Soviet influence on world cinema spread, it was matched by the impact of Abel Gance's *La Roue* (1922–26) in the USSR. Epstein went to work for Russian émigrés who made Films Albatros Paris's leading production company, and from 1924 to 1927 he directed a string of commercial successes for them. His work in the late 1920s converged with Soviet film style—simple, direct “psychological documen-

²¹ Benoît-Lévy, *Art of the Motion Picture*, 212–13; J. Roger-Mathieu, “Au Maroc, avec les interprètes de l'Occident,” *Ciné-miroir*, no. 172 (1928): 471; *Ciné-miroir*, no. 173 (1928): 490; *Ciné-miroir*, no. 174 (1928): 501; Henri Fescourt, *La Foi et les montagnes, ou le septième art au passé* (Paris, 1959), 347; Boulanger, *Cinéma colonial*, 117. Besides *Itto*, Jacques Sévérac's *L'Ame du bled* (1929), *Sirocco* (1930), and *Razzia* (1931) (see p. 196); and *L'Occident*, the Chleuh acted in Violet and Donatien's *Les Hommes nouveaux* (1924), René Le Somptier's *Les Fils du soleil* (1924), Luitz-Morat's *Sang d'Allah* (1922) and *Au seuil du harem* (1921), and other, minor films. See David H. Slavin, “French Cinema's Other First Wave: Political and Racial Economies of *Cinéma Colonial*, 1918–1934,” *Cinema Journal* (fall 1997) 37:1; idem, “Rebels, Settlers, and Tourists”; Raymond F. Betts, *Uncertain Dimensions: Western Overseas Empires in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1985), 49–53; Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, *La Mentalité primitive*, 11th ed. (Paris, 1960), i; Jean Cazeneuve, *Lucien Lévy-Bruhl et son œuvre* (Paris, 1977), 20; and Robert Briffault, *The Making of Humanity* (London, 1919), 73.

tary”—and his *Finis terrae* (1929) showed the influence of Pudovkin's *Mother* (1926).²²

In Paris, Jean continued to work with Benoît-Lévy and Marie, whose scripts written for her brother contained trademark scenes dominated by a single powerful image on which the plot hinged. Then Jean made *Le Lion des Mongols* (1924) for Albatros with actor-screenwriter Ivan Mosjoukine. The nomadic émigré Mosjoukine cross-pollinated French and Soviet cinema theory and technique; he had collaborated with Lev Kuleshov and Pudovkin in a crucial experiment on the dialectic of film artifice and “truth.” Film of Mosjoukine's near-expressionless face was intercut with a bowl of soup, a woman in a coffin, and a girl playing with a teddy bear. Varying the length of virtually identical close-ups created a powerful illusion, in which audiences “saw” strong emotional responses on the actor's face: pensiveness over the forgotten soup, grief over the death, delight with the happy girl. Pudovkin then filmed a biography of Pavlov, *The Mechanism of the Brain* (1925), and applied the “Kuleshov effect” to demystify film's Pavlovian manipulation of audience and actors. His essays led to *Storm over Asia* (1929), a masterwork rivaling Eisenstein's best, about the Buryat Mongol revolt during the Russian civil war. This film and the earlier Jean Epstein–Mosjoukine collaboration bear scrutiny as influential precursors to *Itto*.²³

In *Le Lion des Mongols*, the Russian starred as Roundghito Sing, a young prince who falls in love with a captive princess, Zemgali, and helps her escape the clutches of the Great Khan. In a fierce fight he throws the evil usurper out a window, but the aroused guard force him to flee into the Gobi. There he encounters a French film company making a movie. Anna, the star, is a Paris-educated Mongol whom M. Morel, the banker financing the picture, wants as his mistress. She convinces the director to hire Roundghito and take him back to Paris,

²² Richard Abel, “Booming the Film Business: The Historical Specificity of Early French Cinema,” in *Silent Film*, ed. Richard Abel (New Brunswick, N.J., 1996), 116–19; idem, *French Cinema: The First Wave*, 326–27, 500–501; idem, *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939*, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1986), 2:106–10, 212–15; Léon Moussinac, “Etat du cinéma international” (1933), in *L'Âge ingrat du cinéma*, ed. Léon Moussinac (Paris, 1967), 331–54; Jean Epstein, *Écrits sur le cinéma, 1921–1953*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1974), 1:191–93; Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley, and Andrew Ross (Bloomington, Ind., 1987), 179; Constantine Dorokhine, “Les Emigrés russes à Paris et les films Albatros,” in *Le Cinéma français muet dans le monde: Influences réciproques*, ed. Pierre Guibert (Perpignan, 1989), 127–37; Robert Sklar, *Film: An International History of the Medium* (New York, 1993), 151–53; Robert Stam, Robert Burgoyne, and Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-structuralism, and Beyond* (London, 1992), 9–15. On *La Roue* see Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave*.

²³ Vsevolod I. Pudovkin, “Types instead of Actors” (1929), in *Film Technique and Film Acting*, trans. Ivor Montagu (New York, 1949), 140–42; I. Rostovtsev, “Pudovkin on His Early Films,” in Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, 3d ed. (Princeton, N.J., 1983), 51–66, 248–49; A. Mariamov, *Vsevolod Pudovkin* (Moscow, 1951); Luda Schnitzer and Jean Schnitzer, *Vsevolod Poudovkine* (Paris, 1966), 40; “Le Lion des Mongols,” *Ciné-miroir*, no. 64 (1924): 379.

where Anna's attentions pique Morel's jealousy. The banker tries to corrupt and control the prince by lending him money and introducing him to the soft, elegant Parisian life. Roundghito proves susceptible, even under the stern eye of Kavalas, the hardy warrior who is his faithful companion. But one day Roundghito finds Morel forcing himself on Anna; reminded of Zemgali's plight, the enraged prince attacks the *roué*. Morel wounds him with a shot from his revolver, but before Morel can fire again, Kavalas appears, knocks the weapon from his hand, and strangles him.

To evade the police, Roundghito, Kavalas, and Anna mingle with a huge costume ball in the hotel, but they are found and arrested. A tear in Roundghito's costume reveals a lion tattoo on his chest; by this mark Anna recognizes him as her brother, who survived the palace coup in which the evil Khan killed her father and forced her into exile. Kavalas slips away and reappears with a retinue of Mongol notables, who announce that the usurper has died and that Roundghito is heir to the throne. Back in Mongolia, his coronation is followed by his wedding to Zemgali.²⁴

Exotic fantasies were common enough in the early 1920s to constitute a genre of French film, but Mosjoukine's script cast a decidedly anti-imperialist shadow on *Le Lion des Mongols*. Morel personified imperialism in using his financial power to bend Anna and Roundghito to his will and in resorting to force when money failed. Perhaps to make the Mongol hero and the French villain more palatable to French audiences, the film employed surreal juxtapositions of the Mongol palace and the Hotel Olympic costume ball, reflecting the avant-garde's influence on film. The surreal thus paved the way for the flaming revolution of *Storm over Asia*.

Itto's critique of French colonialism lies in its unconventional characterizations of women and gender roles. Opening with Hamou on horseback, the center of attention, it ends with Itto and Hamou standing side by side on the ramparts of Tidikelt. The big battle scene is an obligatory spectacle of silent-era *cinéma colonial*, and the film focuses on its aftermath, the bodies strewn across the field and the wounded in hospital. Here the bawdy café owner becomes a nurse and is transformed. When one soldier tries to grab her, the others warn him off; she cradles one man in her arms and sings him a lullaby, as if he were a dying child. Itto's actions drive the plot; as it progresses, the film steadily turns its attention to her and her French alter ego, the *tou-*

²⁴ *Ciné-miroir*, no. 64 (1924): 379–80 (photo captions); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 135–36.

bib's wife. In the film's penultimate scene, Itto entrusts her baby to this woman, whose own infant Itto has saved by risking her life to recover some stolen diphtheria vaccine. Reluctantly at first, the white woman accepts the baby and, in response to its hungry cries, suckles it alongside her own at her breast.²⁵

The Mongolia of *Le Lion des Mongols*, like the Shangri-la of *Lost Horizon*, stereotyped "timeless Asia"; the characters must travel to Paris to overthrow its past. Pudovkin sought to capture on film the real inner Asia, which had undergone years of revolutionary upheaval. Released throughout Europe in 1929, *Storm over Asia* impressed critics and audiences with its truthfulness and power, increased their receptivity to the semidocumentary style, and anticipated *Itto*. But the iconoclastic Pudovkin had nothing to do with Benoît-Lévy's paternalistic and self-congratulatory theory of "natural actors." The Russian called the players "casual extras" and revealed the tricks he played to evoke naturalistic performances from them. He wanted a look of rapture on the faces of the onlookers in a scene where they see a rare silver fox fur, so he hired a Chinese conjurer, filmed the fascinated expressions of the Mongol "casuals" watching him perform, and joined it to the film piece of a trader buying the fur. To direct casual actors, "one must be cunning . . . invent thousands of tricks to create the mood in the person and to catch the right moment to photograph him." Pudovkin pretended to no great understanding of the Mongols. Those he used in his film were "absolutely uncultured people who did not even understand my language . . . [yet they] easily compete, as far as acting honors are concerned, with the best actors."²⁶

Much the way French officers aided the production of *Itto*, a political affairs worker named Ashirov acted as Pudovkin's informant, arranged logistics, and recounted the folk tales and described everyday scenes of Buryat life, such as the customary greeting of visitors to a yurt. The commissar helped Pudovkin set the tone of the film. Inkizhi-

²⁵ Clifford, *Predicament of Culture*, 122, 132. "Ethnographic surrealism" crops up in *La Sirène des tropiques* (1927), Josephine Baker's first film, directed by Henri Etievant and Mario Nalpas, with Luis Buñuel as assistant director. See *Ciné-miroir*, no. 154 (1928): 184–85; Slavin, "French Cinema's Other First Wave"; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 1–40; Phyllis Rose, *Jazz Cleopatra: Josephine Baker in Her Time* (New York, 1989), 5, 6, 8, 28, 31, 119–21, 163; Bryan Hammond and Patrick O'Connor, *Josephine Baker* (Boston, 1988), 43–44, 47–49, 72–73; Denise Tual, *Le Temps dévoré* (Paris, 1980), 60; Luis Buñuel, *My Last Breath*, trans. Abigail Israel (London, 1994), 90–91; Raymond Chirat, *Catalogue des films français de long métrage: Films de fiction, 1919–1929* (Toulouse, 1984).

²⁶ Peter Bishop, *The Myth of Shangri-La: Tibet, Travel Writing, and the Western Creation of Sacred Landscape* (Berkeley, Calif., 1989), 8–19, 173–74, 216–18; Edmund Candler, *The Unveiling of Lhasa* (London, 1905); James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (New York, 1934), 211; Peter H. Hansen, "The Dancing Lamas of Everest: Cinema, Orientalism, and Anglo-Tibetan Relations in the 1920s," *American Historical Review* (1996): 712–45; Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 143.

nov, a trained actor and a thoroughly assimilated Mongol, played the lead. Speaking Russian better than Mongolian, he took pains to reconnect with his culture and learned to ride Mongol-style at a Red Army cavalry school. His own father played the father in the film, and Pudovkin filmed the old man in his own home. Stereotyped Mongol habits, such as long hissing sighs to punctuate speech, blowing the nose in the fist, and scratching one's ribs under a tunic, were kept to a minimum. Instead Pudovkin indicated emotion with shy smiles (or, as he called it, "reasons for smiling"), a deliberately narrowed range of movement, and sudden furious explosions of energy.²⁷ Although he took on an air of superiority, parroted Soviet myths about his subjects, and manipulated them, Pudovkin treated them as creative collaborators in depicting their own history. Benoît-Lévy's perception of the Chleuh derived from the Berber myth, which blinded him to proletarianization and other intrusions of market economics that were changing their way of life. The contradiction of hiring and paying the Chleuh to "act natural" escaped him.

Filmed on location around the lamasery of Tomchinsk in the Buryat Soviet Republic and based on an incident from the civil war, Pudovkin's *Storm over Asia* tells the story of a humble trapper, Bair, who catches a rare silver fox but is cheated of his prize by an English merchant. Joining the partisans, he is captured by British occupation troops and ordered shot. In a brilliant sequence, the disheveled, listless trapper shuffles to the execution site, escorted by a smartly marching Tommy who carefully avoids a mud puddle that Bair stumbles through. But forced to look Bair in the eye, the private's resolve crumbles. He botches the shooting, cannot bring himself to deliver the coup de grâce, and leaves Bair for dead. As he trudges back through the same puddle he so primly skirted before, he drags his rifle and his leggings come undone.²⁸ Among Bair's effects a general finds an amulet certifying that he is descended from Genghis Khan. Retrieved and nursed back to health, Bair is pressed into service as a puppet ruler but remains apathetic and quiescent until a young peasant partisan who has begged him for mercy is executed before his eyes. Bair escapes and rejoins the guerrillas, who are mustering their forces. As a metaphor,

²⁷ Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, 143; Leyda, *Kino*, 249; N. Yezuitov, *Pudovkin: Creative Paths* (Moscow, 1937); Peter Dart, *Pudovkin's Films and Film Theory* (New York, 1974), 19–20, 47–48.

²⁸ Vladimir N. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War: Political Parties and Social Movements in Russia, 1918–1922* (Princeton, N.J., 1994), 403–22; Leyda, *Kino*, 248–49; Dart, *Pudovkin's Films*, 19–21, 47–48; "Tempête sur l'Asie," *Ciné-miroir*, no. 235 (1929): 635.

Pudovkin intercuts lowering clouds that let loose a thunderstorm as the Mongol uprising begins, driving out the British.²⁹

As precursors to *Itto*, three distinctly *Lyautiste* films made in Morocco by Jacques Sévérac also deserve consideration. *L'Âme du bled* (1929) recalls Moroccan films of the early 1920s.³⁰ In it a *q'aid* turns away from anticolonial resistance and rallies to France out of friendship for a *colon*. *Sirocco* (1930) retells a legend in which the kidnapped infant son of a *pacha* grows up to become a dangerous bandit chief. Captured and nearly executed, he escapes, dropping an amulet that proves his identity. The *pacha* seeks him out and blesses his marriage to the young woman he loves. *Razzia* (1931), another old tale, is about a bandit siege in 1318 and a *marabout's* daughter held hostage to force the town to open its gates. Her fiancé organizes resistance, saves her, and puts the bandits to flight. In all his films, Sévérac mixed a documentary travelogue with native legends and used Moroccan actor Abslem ben el Kébir and Leila Atouna, a stunning dancer, to play leads. But the dialogue, spoken in Arabic without subtitles, baffled French filmgoers. A reviewer found *Sirocco's* images of Morocco fascinating and Atouna charming but the “shrill cries and bawling intonations” incomprehensible and unsettling; he joked that the language was “gibberish invented for the film.”³¹ With the Maghreb's rich linguistic heritage thus dismissed and without *Itto's* financial and political backing, Sévérac's films fared badly. Yet Si Mammeri, a key adviser to Sultan Youssef, wrote to the director in 1931 to congratulate him on making “one of the rare [films] . . . which does not shock the dignity of the Muslim. You knew how to avoid a pitfall, that of mixing European and native characters.”³¹ Commercial and critical success arrived for Sévérac, but only when he changed his point of view in a 1936 film that glorified the French colonial army.

Audience Reaction to *Itto*

In the 1930s French promotion and distribution of films was haphazard, in sharp contrast with the American system of major film studios, large advertising budgets, and networks of distributors. *Itto* did well at the box office, despite the vicissitudes of distribution, but it met with a

²⁹ Dart, *Pudovkin's Films*, 19–23, 47–48; Leyda, *Kino*, 248–50.

³⁰ For *Sang d'Allah* (1922), *Les Hommes nouveaux* (1924), and *Les Fils du soleil* (1924) see Slavin, “French Cinema's Other First Wave.”

³¹ Jean Barreyre, “Sirocco,” *Pour vous*, no. 162 (1931): 6–7. Si Mammeri quote cited in Maurice-Robert Bataille and Claude Veillet, *Caméras sous le soleil* (Algiers, 1956): 55; François Chevalloné, “Le Cinéma Coloniale en Afrique du Nord: Naissance et Fonctionnement d'un code,” *Revue algérienne des sciences juridiques, économiques, et politiques* 14 (Sept. 1977): 508.

warmer reception among intellectuals than among the general public. *Pour vous* kept the film in the public eye by printing reactions to it in its letters column, "La Parole est aux spectateurs." To judge from them, *Itto* stimulated more audience comment than any other film in the decade.

The fourteen letters printed in four issues of *Pour vous* amply suggest that French viewers identified with the Berber characters. They were delighted to learn how the Chleuh lived and to hear the Berbers speak their language. By using subtitles, moreover, *Itto*'s creators had avoided Sévérac's pitfall. (In France dubbing, although available, was thought to spoil the actor's personality.) The only complaint was that white print was hard to read when it appeared against a light background, like a *jelaba*, the hooded, woolen outer garment worn by Berber men. Only two readers made the mistake of referring to the natives as "Arabs," not "Berbers," and more than half referred to the Chleuh specifically. Their use of the proper noun has significance beyond showing that they were well informed: *Pieds-noirs* called themselves "Algerians," using "Arab," "native," and "black" as interchangeable terms of contempt. Although half of these reader-critics had associations with the Maghreb, their choice of terms implied an aversion to racial politics. Comments came from *colons* in Casablanca, Fez, and Algiers; in a long review a retired *colon* in Cannes stated explicitly that he had lived in Morocco, and others indicated an intimate familiarity with the land. Presuming to speak for all the people of the Maghreb, they expected to be treated as the arbiters of the film's truthfulness and accuracy. *Pour vous*'s readers did defer to them in the ongoing dialogue about the film, but the assessments were contradictory. The Cannes retiree criticized the film for not glorifying the military enough, while a female *colon* felt that the *toubib*'s story covered up the brutalities of conquest.³²

The letter writers most wanted interesting plots, characters, and locales, but they were also concerned over the ongoing competition with Hollywood and compared *Itto* with *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, the Kiplingesque American film that opened in France at the same time. Audiences judged the French film better at showing the ethnography of the *indigènes* and approved the three-dimensional portrayal of the Berbers. Some complained that the French characters seemed undeveloped, cardboard cutouts compared with the colorful British in *Bengal*

³² Sorlin, "Fanciful Empire," 142; Colin Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema, 1930–1960* (Bloomington, Ind., 1993), 123–25; *Pour vous* (20, 27 June, 4, 11 July 1935), "La Parole est aux spectateurs": seven letters from Paris and one each from Joigny (Paris suburb), Var, Cannes (former *colon*); Casablanca (Georgette Benneville); Algiers (Robert L.); Fez ("Lectrice"); Parisienne. The author of this last letter, perhaps a former *colon*, decried it as "hypocrisy to disguise conquest as philanthropy." Six of the fourteen commentators were women.

Lancer, played by Franchot Tone and Gary Cooper. If this spectacular war film with a classic male-bonding theme surpassed *Itto* in rounding out the European characters, for the natives' side of the story the opposite was true. Ironically, French national pride led readers of *Pour vous* to defend the French film's sensitive portrayal of a people that had risen against France. That *Bengal Lancer*, a superficial "operetta Hindus," monopolized the world's attention and garnered greater box-office receipts incensed "Pierrette of Paris," especially since French film artists were given so little credit outside France. For all its limitations and blind spots, therefore, *Itto* was a potent antidote to the creed of race war disseminated by right-wing public intellectuals, most of whom came from within Lyautey's political circle.³³

The Yellow Peril and the End of *Lyautisme* in Film

Although Lyautey imparted genuine admiration and affection for Moroccan civilization to his inner circle, his monarchist affinities wedded him to a rightist, white-supremacist point of view. Personal ties linked him to François de Wendel and Louis Marin, power brokers of the Fédération républicaine, the party dedicated to preserving Catholic, small-town society and its values, embodied in essentialist beliefs in "True France." All three men held ancestral homes near Nancy, in Lorraine, invaded by Germany in 1870, and had openly aligned themselves with the fascist *ligues* and Action française. Their views were expressed by editors like Maurice Muret, who wrote for de Wendel's newspapers, and Henry Massis of *Action française*, who believed that their racial survival depended on dominating nonwhites and occupying their lands. Massis saw the West as "spiritually undone" by the Reformation, physically broken by the Great War, but still possessed of the essence of humanity: "Personality, unity, stability, authority, continuity—these are the root ideas of the West." After books by American white supremacists were translated into French, volumes by Muret and Massis were translated into English. This transatlantic counter-Enlightenment adopted American notions of "whiteness" and with them targeted Asia's teeming millions as the main threat to Western dominance. To Muret and Massis, bolshevism was Asiatic racial treason; its proponents would foment race war by spreading the idea of equality to Asia, which "is not seeking merely to arouse its native peoples to revolt in order to deprive our

³³ *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, directed by Henry Hathaway with Franchot Tone and Gary Cooper (not to be confused with *Gunga Din*, a later film with Cary Grant, Douglas Fairbanks, Victor McLaughlin); see reviews: Otis Ferguson, *New Republic*, 23 Jan. 1935, 305; William Troy, "Blood and Glory," *Nation*, 30 Jan. 1935, 139–40; "Pierrette, Paris," *Pour vous*, no. 345 (1935): 12.

impoverished continent of the immense resources Asia holds. It is the soul of the West that the East wishes to attack.”³⁴

Lyautey convinced Muret and Massis to exempt Morocco from this synecdochal racial schema. While writing *Défense de l'Occident*, Massis sought out the *maréchal* in retirement and spent weeks in consultation with him at his ancestral estate. The Berber myth insulated Moroccans from the racial categories applied to the nonwhite world, but gradually, as Berber policy gave way to settler domination and corporate economic penetration, any good intentions on France's part were canceled. The noble ideal, observed the French anti-imperialist Ignace Lepp, became a squalid, Machiavellian tactic of divide and rule. Even so it failed. Arabs and Berbers united to resist the Berber *dahir* of 1930, and Berbers became more Arabicized and Islamicized as the two groups drew together to shake off French imperial rule. By 1935 even LeGlay was disillusioned; in *L'Afrique française*, the journal of the colonial party, he wrote the Berber policy's epitaph. For that reason, a ring of nostalgia and loss echoes through *Itto*, relieved only by Epstein's maternalistic feminism and hope for the reconciliation of the races through the solidarity of mothers.³⁵

The great fear of Asia had begun to work its way into the mass psychology of France even before the Great War. *L'Invasion jaune* (1909), a fantastic, paranoid espionage trilogy in which Britain furthers an Asian invasion of Europe to protect its empire, was a harbinger of the “yellow peril.” In the novel, English spies and Asian human-wave tactics almost overwhelm the French, who have been weakened by antimilitarism and poor eugenics, but their submarines finally overcome British naval superiority.³⁶ The Russian Revolution and the Rif War prompted a turn from perfidious Albion to bolshevism as the force behind the

³⁴ Michael B. Miller, *Shanghai on the Métro: Spies, Intrigue, and the French between the Wars* (Berkeley, Calif., 1994), 267, 393; Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars over Cultural Identity, 1900–1945* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1992), 16–19, 49–50; William D. Irvine, *French Conservatism in Crisis: The Republican Federation of France in the 1930s* (Baton Rouge, La., 1979), 6–7, 34–38, 81–82; Jean-Noël Jeanneney, *François de Wendel: L'Argent et le pouvoir* (Paris, 1976), 621–22; Jacques Decornoy, *Péril jaune, peur blanche* (Paris, 1970), 191–95; Claude Bellanger, Jacques Godechot, Pierre Guiral, and Fernand Terrou, eds., *Histoire générale de la presse française*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1969–72), 3:393, 529, 532, 557, 591, 596; Maurice Muret, *Le Crépuscule des nations blanches* (Paris, 1925); idem, *The Twilight of the White Races*, trans. Mme Touzalin (New York, 1926) (reviewed in *Nation*, 18 Sept. 1926; *Saturday Review*, 23 Oct. 1926; *Literary Review*, 4 Dec. 1926); Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color* (London, 1920); Henri Massis, *Défense de l'Occident* (Paris, 1927), 14–16; idem, *Defence of the West*, trans. F. S. Flint (New York, 1928), 26–28; David H. Slavin, “The Rif ‘Rebellion’ and the Construction of White Identity in Interwar France” (unpublished manuscript).

³⁵ Ignace Lepp, *Midi sonne au Maroc* (Paris, 1954), 66; Bidwell, *Morocco under Colonial Rule*, 60; Halstead, *Rebirth of a Nation*, 61, 68–75, 178–90, 293; Scham, *Lyautey in Morocco*, 45–47.

³⁶ Capitaine Danrit [Emile Augustin Cyprien Driant], *La Guerre au vingtième siècle: L'Invasion jaune*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1909); Miller, *Shanghai on the Métro*, 26–28, 411.

yellow peril, which lay “beyond the pale of Western Civilization . . . displacing ideological debates onto racial ground . . . the Red threat in Asia on the plane of an eternal conflict between East and West . . . one more Oriental assault upon Europe . . . one more race war.” Serge de Chessin called the 1917 revolution a “renewal of the Mongol invasion on a spiritual plane . . . an apocalyptic raid from bolshevized Asia.” Paul Morand commented that in going to “Asia via Russia the transition is imperceptible.” Morand, author of an account of his travels in inner Asia, later joined the staff of *1933*, a cultural magazine edited by Henri Massis as the right’s counterpoint to the leftist *Marianne*. A *fonctionnaire* for the Foreign Ministry, Morand was also one of the chief screenwriters for Paramount’s Paris Studios.³⁷

By the time Lyautey died in July 1934, six months before *Itto* premiered, the shift to racial superiority was under way, softening the French right to Hitler’s agenda. Nazism evoked the nightmare of German *revanche* but also brought the promise of a vigorous ally to hold back the bolshevized “lesser breeds” clamoring at Europe’s eastern gates. Thus in 1929 Pudovkin’s *Storm over Asia* arrived in Paris movie theaters in a more racially charged atmosphere than Epstein’s *Le Lion des Mongols* had five years before. The silent-screen ode to the Soviet revolution in Asia celebrated the Buryat Mongols as agents of their own history and inspired right-wing fears of bolsheviks goading Asiatic hordes into overrunning the West. It was shown outside the USSR over British protests, and the British Board of Film Censors banned it. A German distribution company, PAX-Film, edited it; changed the title from *The Heir of Genghis Khan*; gave the lead character a more Mongol-sounding name, Timour; and revised the script. The occupying army became White Russian, led by General Petroff, although his manner remained unmistakably English.³⁸

This cinematic palimpsest superimposed the Mongol on the Buryat revolution. The Red Army had played midwife to the Buryat Soviet Republic by defeating Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak’s army and executing him on 7 February 1920. British advisers and eighty freighters of war materiel shipped from Vladivostok two thousand miles along the

³⁷ Miller, *Shanghai on the Métro*, 27, 268; Paul Morand, *Rien que la terre* (Paris, 1926), 23; Serge de Chessin, *La Nuit qui vient de l’Orient* (Paris, 1929), 5–6, 243; Capitaine Danrit [Emile Augustin Cyprien Driant], *La Guerre au vingtième siècle, noire* (Paris, 1894), luridly illustrated by Paul de Sémant, in print during the interwar years, 1913 and 1920 editions; *La Librairie française: Catalogue général des ouvrages parus du 1930*; Decornoy, *Péril jaune, peur blanche*, 194; Daniel Segal, “The European: Allegories of Racial Purity,” *Anthropology Today* (Oct. 1991): 7–9.

³⁸ Dart, *Pudovkin’s Films*, 19–23, 47–48; Leyda, *Kino*, 249–50; Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, vii, 142–43, 194–95; *Ciné-miroir*, no. 235 (1929): 635.

Trans-Siberian Railroad—including two thousand machine guns, six hundred thousand rifles, and 350 million rounds of ammunition—could not hold together this army, “more Tatar horde than modern force.” After it had broken up, a White general, Baron von Ungern-Sternberg, retreated into Mongolia proper and captured Urga (Ulan Bator) from the Chinese. Backed by Japan, whose sights were set on Manchuria, the baron and a sadistic aide, Colonel Sepailov, built a murderous regime on a reign of torture and terror against pro-Soviet Mongols, Jewish merchants, and pro-Chinese lamas. Red Army and Mongol forces crushed von Ungern-Sternberg’s last offensive in May 1921, occupied Urga in June, and ended his deranged dream of carving an anti-Soviet central Asian empire out of this crossroads of Mongol, Siberian, Tibetan, Turkic, and Chinese peoples.³⁹

Storm over Asia premiered in Paris after the rightist government elected in 1928 had imposed a ban on Soviet films, to restrict foreign competition as much as to censor the left. Public distribution of Pudovkin’s *Mother*, Eisenstein’s *Battleship Potemkin*, and six other films was halted, but a network of *ciné-clubs* sprang up to screen them privately, which was still legal. The communists’ Les Amis de Spartacus grew fivefold to fifty thousand members in 1928 and celebrated the Bolshevik revolution’s tenth anniversary by showing Eisenstein’s *October* to packed halls. A “German” film, *Storm over Asia* escaped the ban but not the political controversy. Ilya Ehrenberg, a Soviet writer living in Paris, summed up the right’s response to *Storm over Asia*: “Mongols chasing white men? . . . Where’s the justice in that?”⁴⁰ Morand saw in it Asia’s “ingratitude” to the West for Alexander the Great, the Venetian ambassadors, and Jesuit missionaries who had brought healing arts, abolished torture, and imparted technology. Sarcastically, Ehrenberg added to the list poison gas, “coolie” labor, and League of Nations commissions whereby France piously condemned the Chinese opium habit while collecting revenues from Indochina’s opium monopoly, and likewise condemned white slavery in Shanghai while justifying a network of state-sanctioned brothels in Vietnam as essential to the morale of the army. In his tirade Ehrenberg did not mention that this *maison close*

³⁹ Alan J. K. Sanders, *Mongolia: Politics, Economics, and Society* (Boulder, Colo., 1987), 16–19; William B. Ballis and Robert A. Rupen, *Mongolian People’s Republic*, 3 vols. (New Haven, Conn., 1956), 2:462–507; George G. S. Murphy, *Soviet Mongolia: A Study of the Oldest Political Satellite* (Berkeley, Calif., 1966), 4–28; Richard Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1921*, 3 vols. (Princeton, N.J., 1961–72), 2:183–85, 252–53; 3:ix, 5; Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (Boston, 1987), 143–44, 153–55 (on Kolchak’s “horde” see 238); Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953* (New York, 1992), 62–64; Miller, *Shanghai on the Métro*, 279, 284.

⁴⁰ Ilya Ehrenbourg, *Usine des rêves* (Paris, 1939), 181; Abel, *French Film Theory and Criticism*, 2:29; Sklar, *Film: An International History of the Medium*, 164–65, 171.

system had prevailed in France until 1914, nor did he acknowledge Asia's contributions to the West.⁴¹

The bolshevised yellow peril surfaced in popular fiction as well as in right-wing political essays. *The Lead Idol* (1935), a lurid spy novel, features Mâh le Sinistre, a fanatical Mongol Comintern agent who by day poses as an innocuous, inscrutable exporter but by night disembowels his enemies in seedy Paris hotel rooms. A brilliant chemist, he creates a poison gas to wipe out Paris and an aphrodisiac to make women his sexual slaves. Bram Stoker's vampire evoked no greater fear-fascination or racial-sexual paranoia. The author Charles Robert-Dumas poured out the 1930s' most fearful images: Red infiltration, Asiatic barbarity, more poison gas.⁴² Playing on these fears, Algerian *pieds-noirs* argued that they, like the Germans, manned the front lines of the global race war.

The sturdy triad of technology, science, and medicine supported notions of Western superiority, and French scientific expeditions to inner Asia conveyed that message. Following Sven Hedin and Roy Chapman Andrews, Citroën sponsored the team of Haardt and Audoin-Dubreuil, who had traversed Africa in 1924 in the company's *autochenille* half-tracks, which tucked away equipment like a Swiss Army knife. In mid-1931, after a year of meticulous mapping and caching fuel and supplies along the route, Haardt embarked from Beirut and reached Afghanistan's Pamirs, the highest, most treacherous mountain passes in the world. A second team set out from Peking to Sinkiang and Turkestan, maintaining radio contact, which allowed the newspapers to print real-time accounts of their progress.⁴³ Haardt filmed *La Croisière jaune* as he had *La Croisière noire*, recording the "Sherpa bearers" who hacked away stone outcroppings where the mountain roads became too narrow for the *autochenilles* and who disassembled the vehicles to carry the pieces across river gorges. As in Africa, the expedition's dependence on local human labor went unnoted in the film. The rivers finally defeated the half-tracks, forcing Haardt to cross into China on foot and wait for the Peking team to cross the Gobi. After braving Chinese ban-

⁴¹ Ehrenbourg, *Usine de rêves*, 180–81; Joseph Needham's works for Chinese science and technology; Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830–1920* (London, 1974); V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: Black Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire* (London, 1969); Abel, *French Cinema*, 40, 264–66; Leprohon, *Exotisme*, 259–62.

⁴² Charles Robert-Dumas, "Ceux de S.R." (Deuxième Bureau's "section de renseignement") series of novels (Paris, 1934–39); *L'Idole de plomb* (1935) sold 27,500 copies (Miller, *Shanghai on the Métro*, 179). For a contemporary comparison see Luise White, "Alien Nation: The Hidden Obsession of UFO Literature: Race in Space," *Transition*, no. 63 (1994): 24–33.

⁴³ *La Croisière jaune* (1932). Videotape courtesy of Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar, University of Iowa Institute of Film and Society.

mits, warlords, and a Soviet travel ban, the Peking group picked up their stranded eastbound team and whisked them back to China. In Hong Kong, Haardt died of the flu; the team abandoned his plan to drive back via Indochina and India and sailed home.⁴⁴

Civilizing Mission and Great Fear: Medicine and Disease

Haardt succumbed to the virus that had felled Berriau, and in the previous century Africa's diseases had swept whole garrisons of French and British troops into their graves. By 1900 Western medicine had triumphed over malaria, typhus, typhoid, and yellow fever, and the *toubib* became a powerful symbol of the imperial mission's ability (conveyed by Lyautey and *Itto's* directors to the French public) to improve the lives of nonwhites with basic hygiene. For advocates of race war, medical science was just as valuable; it stopped barbarian disease at Europe's gates, preventing the contamination of the body by a "rising tide of color." But the Great War, which shook Europe's faith in technological progress, also showed that medical advances were neither exclusively benign nor omnipotent. The conquest of infectious disease had allowed the massing of troops in permanent positions and hence had invited wholesale slaughter on the western front. And science had been helpless to prevent the influenza pandemic of 1918, which killed 20 million worldwide. The deadly germ seemed always to come from "outside" and probably mutated from endemic, less virulent strains brought together from four continents by wartime recruitments and spread rapidly among and by demobilized soldiers and migrant workers. French death rates were comparable to those of other industrial countries, but twice as many women as men were struck down. Displaying extraordinary resignation, Catholics claimed that God had sent *la grippe* to restore the balance of sexes. The French press promised that a cure was imminent, but viruses were still unknown, and the news accounts, covered by a heavy blanket of wartime censorship, were all simply *bourrage de crâne*, fraudulent attempts to allay public fears.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Miller, *Shanghai on the Métro*, 276–305, esp. 279–81; Ferdinand Ossendowski, *Beasts, Men, and Gods* (New York, 1922). The French translation of the latter, by Robert Renard (1924), sold forty thousand copies.

⁴⁵ William H. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, N.Y., 1976); Philip D. Curtin, *Death by Migration: Europe's Encounter with the Tropical World in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1989), 28–39; idem, "Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa," *American Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (June 1985): 594–630; Alfred W. Crosby Jr., *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900* (Cambridge, 1986), 294–308; idem, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn., 1972); idem, *Epidemic and Peace, 1918* (Westport, Conn., 1976); Richard Collier, *The Plague of the Spanish Lady: The Influenza Pandemic of*

The habits of propaganda “barrage” carried over from the war to colonial policy to film. In *Itto* Western science conquers colonial disease and wins the war against “superstition,” thus promoting an image of France’s service to humanity and an optimism that seems anachronistic for the post-1918 era. Itto’s newborn son is stricken with diphtheria, and she carries him over a snowbound mountain pass to the French medical station. The *toubib* cures him, setting up the chain of events that leads her to defy her father. To prevent an epidemic, she brings the doctor to the *souk* (market) to inoculate Chleuh children. Outraged by the infidel interloper’s interference, local sorcerers start a riot. In the melee, Hamou’s men steal the medicines, which are packed in wooden cartridge cases that they think contain bullets. At the fortress they open the boxes and realize the mistake; in an attempt to imbibe the *baraka* (power or spiritual mandate) of the *toubib*, a sorcerer swallows some of each kind of serum and pill. This simply leaves him writhing and moaning in pain. Hamou orders them to sell the drugs to buy ammunition, but when the thieves return to the *souk*, the women surround them and force them to relinquish the medicines. Itto leads the women and children through the mountains to the medical station. Half dead from exposure, they arrive with the precious vaccines in time for the doctor to save his own baby, whom he inoculates before attending to the Berbers.⁴⁶

The scenes of sorcerers and stomachaches stereotype a non-Western healing system as ineffectual and its practitioners as opportunists preying on their superstitious patients. The Berber women, however, assimilate “rational” Cartesian norms. No such hope is held out in *L’Aventurier*, made the same year. It begins with Arabs attacking a mine in Tunisia. The young engineer in charge arms his men, and they beat back the raid, although the mine is destroyed. Back in France, the engineer faces a strike in which his miners attack the mine’s owner’s home. By agreeing to hear their demands, the hero persuades them to stop. Thus it is suggested that French workers are swayed by reason but Arabs respond only to force. Director Marcel L’Herbier based his film on a 1923 original, following the common 1930s practice of adapting

1918–1919 (New York, 1974); H. Phillips, “Black October”: *The Impact of the Spanish Influenza Epidemic on South Africa* (Pretoria, 1990); Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1989), 345–401; David H. Slavin, “Social History of the Influenza Pandemic in France” (unpublished manuscript including a survey of press accounts from ten Paris newspapers during the two most virulent outbreaks, in Nov. 1918 and Feb. 1919); Ministère de la Guerre, *Pandémie de grippe du 1er mai 1918 au 30 avril 1919*, pt. 3 of *Statistique médicale* (Paris, 1922); Michel Corday, *The Paris Front: An Unpublished Diary, 1914–1918*, trans. (London, 1933), 382.

⁴⁶ Boulanger, *Cinéma colonial*, 114–16.

silent-era box-office successes. But whereas the colonial venture makes the silent film's hero rich, in the sonorized version he is ruined. The lead-in makes little difference in the plot, but the alterations indicate a change in mindset toward the potential of the colonies and natives for rational economic development.⁴⁷

L'Homme du Niger echoes *Itto*'s theme of combatting diseases and backwardness but draws darker implications. Filmed on location in the French Sudan in April 1939, as war clouds gathered over Europe, it features a military doctor and an engineer, favorite sons of the "mission civilisatrice," aided by *petites sœurs*, the nurses, who strive to overcome native passivity and superstition through science and technology. The captain of the engineers is building a dam to bring prosperity and progress, but he contracts leprosy. The doctor tries to convince him that he can be cured if he will only rest, but the captain knows that his fate is sealed and sacrifices himself to finish the dam. He spurns his fiancée, the daughter of a minister who has supported his project, and urges his lieutenant to marry her in his stead. At the climax an African sorcerer, "un nègre fanatique" who holds the tribe under his spell, incites his followers to burn the clinic and damage the dam. While they gesticulate wildly and yell inarticulate cries, the sorcerer grabs a gun and shoots the doctor through the heart.

Whereas *Itto* had asserted a faith in the capacity of the Berber women, at least, to recognize the advantages of adopting Western medicine, the irrational attack in *L'Homme du Niger* reflected a deep pessimism over colonial progress, accompanied by vexation with the ungrateful "savages." A scrofulous, passive race that had squandered its own resources had to be taken in hand by whites, even though France's heroic, selfless devotion to duty was in vain. *Colon* attitudes of overlordship rubbed off on director, writers, and actors; publicity photos taken on location show the cast and crew lounging on a veranda, attended by a retinue of African servants. Leprosy, the loathesome companion of medieval and equatorial backwardness, represented a rot eating away at the Third Republic. *L'Homme du Niger* premiered two months after the Nazi attack on Poland and seven months before Paris fell to Hitler. As in *Heart of Darkness*'s tale of the Congo told from a vessel anchored in the Thames, the Niger is also the Seine.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., 116–17; Sorlin, "Fanciful Empire," 144; Raymond Chirat, ed., *Catalogue des films français de long métrage: Films sonores de fiction, 1929–1939* (Paris, 1978); for *L'Aventurier* (1923), directed by Maurice Mariaud, see idem, *Catalogue des films français de long métrage: Films de fiction, 1919–1929*.

⁴⁸ *L'Homme du Niger* (1939), directed by Jacques de Baroncelli (review in *Débats*, 18 Feb. 1940); M. Doringe, "Jacques de Baroncelli, Harry Baur, Victor Francen . . . sont partis pour le

Immigration from North Africa also stimulated French fears of moral decay and infection by conjuring up repellent images of vice, disease, and rape. The prefect of the Loire urged the government to expel foreigners in 1925, since they carried tuberculosis and syphilis and contributed nothing to France. On the left, these migrants aroused pity but not a challenge to the stereotype or the cause of the wretchedness. Jean Renoir's *La Vie est à nous*, filmed for the Communists' 1936 election campaign, contains a scene of an Algerian washing cars in a garage. The unemployed worker who is the central character hears his hacking tubercular cough and asks if he feels well. "Mohammed" tells him that things are better here than at home. Renoir's vision was broad enough to see the Arab as part of the Popular Front, but Mohammed, with only one line in which to tell his story, is a wraith, like the ghostly figures roaming the jungle around the camp of Joseph Conrad's Kurtz.⁴⁹

In Paris, the municipal councillor Pierre Godin warned that North Africans there were spreading syphilis and other diseases. With his alarms he promoted and raised funding for the Hôpital franco-musulman, which served and controlled the new arrivals. His son, André, became head of the Service des affaires indigènes nord-africains (SAINA) in 1932. A forty-man police unit created to keep the North Africans in Paris under surveillance during the Rif War, SAINA provided employment and health and welfare services to migrants and deported "undesirables." The Maghrebin in Paris roundly hated SAINA, and nationalists like L'Etoile Nord Africaine condemned it. The Godins' paternalism was, like *Itto*'s, linked to maternalistic feminism. Pierre's wife, Huguette, organized a feminist conference during the Colonial Exposition of 1931, which held aloft the ideal of white women as bearers of civilization to colonial peoples. They would bring enlightenment, abolish "barbaric" customs, and improve the treatment of Arab women. Familial colonialism waned as settler power grew, but the Godins reproduced small-scale *Lyautisme* in Paris, like the scale-

Niger," *Pour vous*, no. 542 (1939): 13; photos, *Pour vous*, no. 544 (1939): 6; Kira Appel, "Ce que sera l'Homme du Niger," *Pour vous*, no. 560 (1939): 10; review by "MB," *Pour vous*, no. 576 (1939): 12; Michèle Lagny, Marie-Claire Ropars, and Pierre Sorlin, *Générique des années 30* (Vincennes, 1986), 140–44.

⁴⁹ Ralph Schor, *L'Opinion française et l'étrangères* (Paris, 1985), 166–67; *La Vie est à nous* (1936), directed by Jean Renoir; Jonathan Buchsbaum, *Cinema Engagé: Film in the Popular Front* (Urbana, Ill., 1988), 130, 224–25, 229–30, 286; Benjamin Stora, "Les Algériens dans le Paris de l'entre-deux-guerres," in *Paris des étrangers: Depuis un siècle*, ed. André Kaspi and Antoine Marès (Paris, 1989), 154; Dudley Andrew, *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film* (Princeton, N.J., 1995), 213–20; Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, "French Cinema of the 1930s and Its Social Handicaps," in *La Vie est à nous*, ed. Ginette Vincendeau and Keith Reader (London, 1986), 61–71; Ginette Vincendeau, "The Popular Cinema of the Popular Front," *ibid.*, 73–101; Goffredo Fofi, "The Cinema of the Popular Front in France, 1934–38," *Screen* 13 (Winter 1972–73).

model temple of Angkor Wat constructed for the exposition and like *Itto's* white woman, the *toubib's* wife, who nurses *Itto's* son from her own breast. Yet films made during the Popular Front era transformed white women into agents of the white man's destruction.⁵⁰

Aside from two noteworthy exceptions, Julien Duvivier's internationally acclaimed *Pépé le Moko* (1937) and Pierre Chenal's *Maison du Maltais* (1938), colonial film narrowed after *Itto* to a subgenre, the Foreign Legion movie.⁵¹ Nearly a dozen such films, typified by *Les Réprouvés*, were made in the late 1930s. In 1936 Sévérac, whose Moroccan trilogy had fared so badly, filmed an adaptation of this novel by a favorite writer of the Legion's high command, André Armandy, who had won an Académie française prize for it. The "outcasts," troops of the disciplinary Bataillons d'Afrique, were not Legionnaires per se but soldiers convicted of crimes while in the service. Dregs of the dregs, they were ironically nicknamed "Joyeux." In Sévérac's hackneyed scenario, a handsome nobleman, deceived in love, volunteers to take command of a unit of Joyeux in the Sahara. A former mistress joins him at the fort just before unnamed insurgents surround and attack it. All the tricks of warfare cannot raise the siege; the off-camera attackers are too many. With the fort about to be overrun, the nobleman poisons his mistress so she will not fall into the hands of the rebels; then he blows up the fort. Reinforcements arrive too late for the last stand, but a parade is held in honor of the fallen and sings the Joyeux's anthem.

In this second foray into the colonial genre, Sévérac took his cameras to Bou Sâada, 175 miles south of Algiers. At the outskirts of town, the fort, half destroyed in an uprising fifty years before, was a symbol-laden landmark featured in films, travel posters, and guided tours. In its shadow, Sévérac repeated the stereotypes that Muslims understood only force, were cunning but unintelligent, and lusted after white women. Branded as cruel and reduced to anonymous masses, the Arabs win through sheer numbers, not strategy. In the end, the relief column's technological superiority and discipline sweep them away, along with the views of Lyautey and *Itto's* makers.⁵²

50 Huguette Godin, "Le Mouvement féministe," *Le Quotidien* (29 Dec 1930); Octave De-Pont, *Les Berbères en France: L'Hôpital franco-musulman de Paris et du département de la Seine* (Lille, 1937), 1–136; documentation on L'Etoile Nord Africaine, Archives de la Préfecture de police, APP, carton B/A 56–57.

51 I discuss both films in another chapter of my monograph.

52 Abdelghani Megherbi, *Les Algériens au miroir du cinéma colonial* (Algiers, 1982), 192–95; Douglas Porch, *The French Foreign Legion: A Complete History of the Legendary Fighting Force* (New York, 1991), 59, 202, 293–94. *Firmin, le muet de St. Pataclet* (1938), directed by Sévérac, features a veteran in a small town in Provence as the shell-shocked tragic hero. When the powder magazine of a nearby arsenal blows up as he is walking by, he regains his speech and enlists in the Foreign Legion.

Foreign Legion films, with their penchant for military action, came to dominate colonial cinema at a time when the issues of colonial rule had become too complex and problematic for simple solutions. Location shooting shifted from Morocco to Algeria and was subject to military censorship. The authorities subsidized celebratory, unimaginative films that presented the image of a self-sacrificing, tough, disciplined colonial army to the public. *Itto* and the Moroccan-based output of the silent era had portrayed a polychromatic, nuanced Maghreb. In contrast, even the best Legion films, such as *Le Grand jeu* (1934), made North Africa a place where white men fought an invisible, anonymous other, described only as *les salopards* ([black] bastards; swine) or *l'ennemi*. Their plots—or plot, since every film contained these elements—revolved around a lovelorn white male criminal's search for redemption in the desert. Sacrificing his life for comrades, regiment, and corps, he held the “thin white line” of the West against the colored hordes of the earth. The letters from *Pour vous*'s readers attest to the fact that *Itto* helped perpetuate a counterdiscourse to the dominant, race-war vision of the world. And yet the film also reflected the strains of its creators' disparate points of view. Strange bedfellows, they made common cause. Lyautey's mythologizing protégés and heirs gave voice to a paternalistic colonialism consistent with Benoît-Lévy's idea of the Berber as overgrown child. Marie Epstein, who infused the film with her feminism's hope and power, holds the best claim to having made it a democratic, anti-white-supremacist vision of the future.